'I never accepted Lata's voice in the industry'

VINTAGE WINE

O.P. NAYYAR

At 75, O.P. Nayyar has switched his focus from music to homeopathy. 'Beer in the afternoon, Scotch in the evening keeps me fit,' he tells

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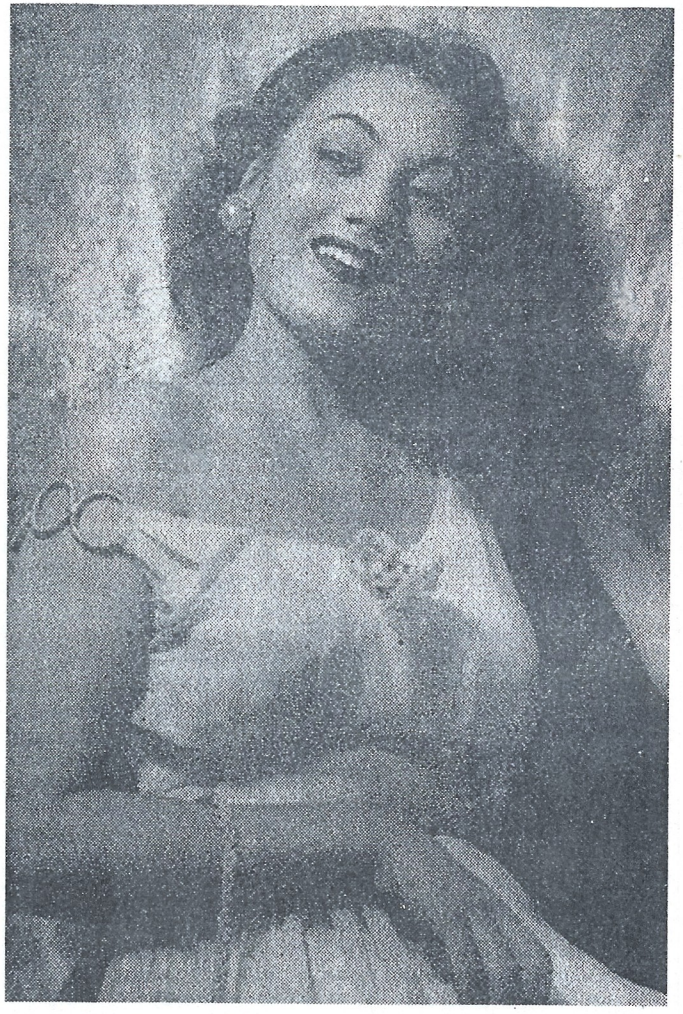

'I LOVED MADHUBALA. I WAS THE ONLY COMPOSER SHE WORKED WITH IN SIX FILMS'

The hat is his trademark. And there are many feathers in his. It's said that O.P. never entertained any interference in his music. Once when Guru Dutt scoffed at his knowledge of camera angles, O.P. asked him what he knew about music. Guru Dutt never interfered again.

Omkar Prasad Nayyar, the popular composer of timeless tunes like *Mera naam chin chin chu* and *Deewana hua baadal*, is all about attitude and altitude. (Even at 75, the way he carries himself adds several inches to his person).

His attitude is bolstered by the fact that he's probably the only music director to have composed tunes, without any formal nowledge of classical music, at the age of 17.

With an illustrious and successful career spanning more than a decade from the 50's to 60's, O.P. feels he has achieved whatever was his due. "I got a lot of respect. *Khuda jisko chahta hai, use izzat deta hai, aur jisko chahta hai, use zillat deta hai*," says the composer.

After seven decades of loving and living, Nayyar shows no signs of ageing. A pretty woman still brings a twinkle to his eyes. "Women, the currency of a country, a good drink and good food have no age or language bar. These can be enjoyed anytime," he says with a full-throated laugh.

Ask if he would be interested in composing film music now, and O.P. promptly replies, "O.P. Nayyar the composer is dead. I have retired from the music field. Earlier, I used music to heal the soul, now as a homeopath, I'm concentrating on healing the physique, and I'm very busy."

On the general opinion among senior composers about the deteriorating quality of music, O.P. says, "Present day composers are doing a good job. Imagine cassettes sell in crores nowadays in comparison to when I was in the industry. I guess whoever complains about the music these days is plain frustrated. Old is not necessarily gold," he adds.

He frequently worked with Geeta Dutt and Asha Bhonsle, but O.P. is possibly the only major composer in the industry to have never worked with Lata Mangeshkar. However, he has no regrets. "I never accepted Lata's voice in the industry. There were no misunderstandings between us. Somehow, things never worked out with her."

Always a composer of soulful melodies, O.P. is the eternal romantic. "I enjoyed composing the background score for romantic, emotional and dramatic scenes. Action scenes were never my forte, those I would leave to my assistant. I loved romantic movies," he says. But O.P. also says he has never watched his music being brought alive on screen. "I never felt like watching a movie I had composed music for."

He is also known for his love of beauty. "I loved Madhubala. Did you know I was the only composer she worked with in six films?" he asks proudly.

Out of the industry for nearly 30 years, Nayyar is currently practising as a homeopath for charity. "Forty years ago, I was introduced to the homeopath master, Sudhir Phadke. Somehow, I persuaded him to teach me the art. Today, because of him, I am able to practice. This way I can do my bit for the poor," he says.

Nayyar believes in keeping himself healthy. "I go for a walk every morning. I used to love non-veg food. But now a balance of vegetarian food, a bottle of beer in the afternoon and some Scotch in the evening keeps me fit."